

Kazakhstan on the international scene

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a country situated in Central Asia and, according to the Council of Europe, Eastern Europe. Ranked as the ninth largest country in the world as well as the world's largest landlocked country, it has a territory of 2,727,300 km (greater than Western Europe). It is bordered by Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China.

Vast in size, the land in Kazakhstan is very diverse in types of terrain: flatlands, steppes, taigas, rock-canyons, hills, deltas, mountains, snow-capped mountains and deserts. Kazakhstan has the 62nd largest population in the world, with a population density of less than 6 people per square kilometer.

The Russians began advancing into the Kazakh steppe in the 18th century, and by the mid-19th century all of Kazakhstan was part of the Russian Empire. Following the 1917 Russian Revolution, and subsequent civil war, the territory of Kazakhstan was reorganized several times before becoming the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic in 1936, a part of the USSR. During the 20th century, Kazakhstan was the site of major Soviet projects, including Khrushchev's Virgin Lands campaign, the Baikonur Cosmodrome, and the Semipalatinsk "Polygon", the USSR's primary nuclear weapon testing site.

Kazakhstan declared itself an independent country on December 16, 1991, the last Soviet republic to do so. Its communist-era leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, became the country's new president. Since independence, Kazakhstan has pursued a balanced foreign policy and worked to develop its economy, especially its hydrocarbon industry. While the country's economic outlook is improving, President Nazarbayev maintains strict control over the country's politics. Several opposition leaders and journalists have been killed in recent years, and Western observers generally do not consider Kazakhstan's elections to be free and fair. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's international prestige is building. It is now considered to be the dominant state in Central Asia. The country belongs to many international organizations, including the United Nations, NATO's Partnership for Peace, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In 2010, Kazakhstan was the chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In June 2011 the country will take over the presidency of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, remaining in the so called «troika» of current, former future chairman in the OSCE.

It's possibly to say that our country has been attracting the world's attention over the past two decades with its successes in the creation of institutions of statehood, the implementation of market reforms in the economy and the formation of a tolerant multi-denominational and multiethnic society. Kazakhstan is famous for its contribution to the strengthening of global stability and nuclear security, as an initiator and active player in many processes in the sphere of disarmament, confidence building and the creation of a collective system of security.

Kazakhstan's foreign policy and involvement in the affairs of the international community have developed rigorously in all key aspects that have become traditional. This includes participation in international and regional organizations (the UN, the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference), development of bilateral relations (with Russia, Central Asian and CIS countries, the USA, EU member states, China, Muslim countries and Asia-Pacific states). Thus, Kazakhstan's

foreign policy is based on three key directions: international law, multilateral relations and bilateral relations.

Kazakhstan has successfully entered the international community and international structures at global, regional and subregional levels. The country has joined most international treaties and agreements and, as a result, became part of the international legal space.

Kuzmenko I.